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# National Coral Reef Management Fellows Newsletter

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## **Fellowship News: the 2018-2020 Fellowship Term**

The partnership administration team has been hard at work to recruit and select the next round of National Coral Reef Management Fellows. The final candidates are currently making site visits and preparing for their move to their jurisdictions, which will be their home for the next two years. The jurisdictional partners, as well as the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, the U.S. Department of Interior's Office of Insular Affairs, the U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee and the Nova Southeastern University's Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography, look forward to another round of successful and productive fellows.

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## **Focus on Fellows**

In each newsletter edition, fellows from the 2016-2018 cohort will be featured. This month, we caught up with Hilary Lohmann in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Kelly Montenero in Florida, Sabrina Woofter in American Samoa, and Malcolm Johnson in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

### **Hilary Lohmann**

Hilary Lohmann is the Fellow based on St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). Born and raised in Summit, New Jersey, she studied Animal Behavior at Bucknell University. After earning her bachelor's degree, she learned through internship experiences in natural resources management nonprofits around the world (most notably Belize and Zambia) that her passion and professional contributions lie in the human dimensions of protected areas and resource use, rather than the science of the resources themselves. She then earned a Masters in Marine Affairs from University of Rhode Island, because: "Conservation is primarily not about biology, but about people and the choices they make." Balmford & Cowling, 2006

*How did you find out about the fellowship?*

I first saw the fellowship position posted on the jobs site Open Channels. The

fellowship was a really exceptional experience, and appropriately timed in my career development (post-Master's, which was after three years' international working experience).

*How did you decide to accept the position?*

I wanted to work in the Caribbean on protected area management and protected areas' relations with coastal communities.

*What task from your work plan are you most proud of?*

I worked to establish a volunteer program to monitor nesting sea turtles along the beaches of the East End Marine Park. It was a high priority need identified in the Park management plan and it is a highly popular program amongst participants due to a variety of rewarding aspects with education about local sea turtle populations, physical activity, and direct Park management support. It's fun, productive, and effective!

*What were some milestones for you in the course of the fellowship?*

I founded a nonprofit! And I outfitted a savvy, diverse, yet connected board of directors to carry it forward in the future.

*Tell us about your recent professional development experience.*

I attended the Fourth International Marine Protected Areas Congress in La Serena, Chile. I found the experience humbling, as there was so much to learn and so many experts in one place at one time. However, I also found it challenging to identify exhibitions and individuals whose work directly related to my own in St. Croix, at an international event of such scale both geographically and thematically, in terms of marine reserve size, management capacity, and community support regimes.

### ***Meet the 2016-2018 fellows!***



#### **Kelly Montenero**

Kelly Montenero is the Fellow placed in Miami, Florida. Growing up in Wisconsin, she loved playing on and studying freshwater, but when she studied abroad in Dominica, West Indies, she fell in love with the marine side of things. She obtained her Bachelor of Science at the University of Wisconsin studying limnology and conservation biology and obtained her Master of Science in Marine Affairs and Policy at University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, where she conducted fisheries and marine reserve research in Dry Tortugas National Park, while also working in a coral research laboratory. She has worked as a marine science instructor on Catalina Island, California and in the British Virgin Islands, as a fisheries field technician in Alaska, and as whale naturalist and then a marine conservation and outreach coordinator on Maui, Hawai'i. She's conducted coral and fisheries research in Panama, the Bahamas and Florida and is happy to be back to her grad school stomping grounds.

*How did you find out about the fellowship?*

I heard about the fellowship from a former classmate who was a fellow in a past cohort. After being referred to the position announcement from various former colleagues, I decided to apply to the position in southeast Florida. Though I was working in Hawai'i at the time, I was excited about the opportunity to return to an ecosystem and area that I was familiar with, in order to work to increase capacity in coral reef resource management, research and outreach.

*What task from your work plan are you most proud of?*

Last year, I worked with colleagues from various agencies to establish, coordinate and sample for a northern extent Florida Reef Tract water quality monitoring program. This year, I've worked with colleagues to host an interagency, multi university Coral Disease Workshop. I'm also holding a citizen science called Bio Blitz to increase awareness and knowledge about our reef in southeast Florida and the many threats it faces.

*What were some milestones for you in the course of the fellowship?*

As a part of my role as fellow, I coordinate the Southeast Florida Action Network, a citizen reef user based reporting and response network for marine incidents. During my time as fellow, I've done a lot of outreach and promotion of the program and increased the amount of reports received by threefold. I've recently been working to create a database of all Coral Management Fellows to foster our alumni network and connect former and current fellows as coral conservation professionals. Other milestones were participating in many trainings, meetings, workshops and conferences, including our all-fellows trainings.

*Tell us about your recent professional development experience.*

I also attended the Fourth International Marine Protected Areas Congress held in La Serena, Chile. It was an amazing experience that brought together a vast group of scientists, practitioners, marine park managers, governmental agencies and nonprofits to discuss best practices and next steps in the field of marine protected areas. I presented a poster on my graduate school research and gave a speed presentation on the same work, which was in a marine reserve in Florida. I felt honored to be a part of such an important meeting.

### ***Meet the 2016-2018 fellows!***



#### **Sabrina Woofter**

Sabrina Woofter is the current Fellow working in American Samoa. Sabrina was born and raised in Jacksonville, Florida, where she received her bachelor's degree in anthropology from the University of North Florida. She then volunteered with AmeriCorps to establish eco-tourism and economic development projects in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta of Alaska. The combination of cultural and environmental stewardship pushed her to pursue a master's degree from the University of North Carolina Wilmington in environmental studies, focusing on coastal issues. During this time, she worked with several local organizations to conserve coastal habitats via marine education and oyster reefs restoration. After graduate school, she worked in southeastern North Carolina to protect and improve its ecosystems as a natural

resources and environmental education agent for North Carolina State University. Her work focused on storm water issues, composting, and coastal habitat restoration and conservation. The beginning of this fellowship in 2016 brought a valuable opportunity to continue protecting and improving precious natural resources, coral reefs in the South Pacific.

*How did you find the fellowship?*

Although I loved my position as a Natural Resources Extension Agent for North Carolina State University, I started looking for a job where I could have more of an influence on a tropical community and their ecosystems, especially those impacted by climate change. This had been an interest of mine since I began my undergraduate studies in 2004. I am extremely grateful that I ran across the Fellowship online while searching for such a job.

*What made you decide to accept it?*

You don't turn down a dream come true! I wanted to explore Samoan culture, coral reefs, tropical rain forests, and a lack of strip malls. I am filled with the utmost gratitude for the opportunity to do this while simultaneously building the capacity for the communities here to protect their natural resources.

*What task from your work plan are you most proud of?*

The Resiliency and Climate Change Samoan Glossary (a better title is the works) is the epitome of successful applied environmental anthropology and I could not be more proud to facilitate the creation of this document. I have been able to work with the Samoan Studies Institute and several Samoan environmental professionals to decide on English terms and definitions, and their most appropriate Samoan translations, for scientific concepts that are essential to understand as the island territory faces impacts from climate change and other human-induced stresses. My linguistics professor would be proud!

*What were some major milestones for you in the course of the fellowship?*

Hurdles, more so than milestones, have stood out during these past 22 months. I consider learning how to overcome, or bypass, logistical and support hurdles as personal milestones in defining and realizing successful conservation. I have garnered invaluable experiences learning how to work with few available tools and among unique social and jurisdictional parameters. Most importantly, however, was understanding which hands to shake; literally and figuratively. My experiences through fruitful collaborations with partner agencies and motivated communities has been essential to getting project work done. Although timelines were skewed, these collaborations provided tools, supplies, and the manpower that led to successful installation of multiple rain gardens.

These lessons will surely follow me to my next professional adventure.

*How was your recent professional development experience?*

I attended the Hawaiian Conservation Conference in Honolulu in July of this year. The conference is well known in American Samoa as it's one of the few, biannual, "nearby" knowledge exchange events that is relevant to the territory and its ecological issues. I presented a talk on building capacity for American Samoa's communities to manage their storm water. It was valuable comparing and contrasting the financial, human, and technical resources between Hawai'i and American Samoa. Although the two entities have significant differences in culture, demographics, and size, there are enough similarities in both island groups with ecological issues and potential solutions.

***Meet the 2016-2018 fellows!***



**Malcolm Johnson**

Malcolm Johnson is the fellow based on Rota in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Originally from Northern Virginia, he completed his Bachelor of Art in Sociology and the Environment at Wichita State University and his Master of Art in Ocean and Coastal Resource Management at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey. After finishing his master's degree, Malcolm worked as an outdoor educator on the Eastern Shore of Maryland for a year before traveling to the Philippines to serve as a Coastal Resource Management Volunteer with the Peace Corps. He is excited to broaden his focus from coral reef restoration, marine protected area establishment, and fisheries management to working on community development and watershed management issues.

*How did you find the fellowship?*

I found the fellowship via a job posting on one of the ocean and marine job boards.

*What made you decide to accept it?*

The primary reason I accepted the fellowship was to continue working in the coastal resource management field on small tropical islands, on the frontline of climate change. After working abroad for a few years, it was a great opportunity to work in a United States territory with a culture similar to what I've become accustomed to. Additionally, the proposed work within the job description to do watershed management activities was similar enough to my past work that I felt confident in my abilities while still allowing me to learn and develop new skills.

*What task from your work plan are you most proud of?*

I'm most proud of the report I co-authored with a team at Horsley Witten regarding soil loss and stream water quality. Throughout the year, I collected water samples at a number of locations in the watershed and assisted with the data synthesis for the report. The report will assist Saipan in determining management next steps and is essential in garnering more support for the continuation of both the revegetation project and stream monitoring.

*What were some major milestones for you in the course of the fellowship?*

There have been a number of significant milestones. My initial arrival and being

thrust into a number of projects presented me with weeks of training to get up to speed. The next major milestone was when I had the opportunity to begin analyzing the data I had collected weekly in preparation to write the soil loss and stream water quality report. Finding trends and noticing gaps in the data lead to a feeling of excitement and hope for the importance of the fellow position on Rota. After finishing the report, the next major milestone included presenting the findings to the community. It was well received and has led to some possible future opportunities for collaboration.

*How was your recent professional development experience?*

My professional development was extremely inspiring. By attending the XV Islands of the World conference in Kangaroo Island, South Australia, I had the opportunity to hear from a wide range of disciplines centered around small island communities. Presentations ranged from conservation to photography, from islands in the Arctic to tropical atolls. The diversity of conversations that I had helped me grasp my role as a fellow on Rota and how I can best contribute to the sustainability of conservation on our island.

**The National Coral Reef Management Fellowship was established in 2003 to respond to the need for additional coral reef management capacity in the U.S. coral reef jurisdictions in the Pacific and Atlantic/Caribbean. The fellowship is a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Coral Reef Conservation Program, the U.S. Department of Interior's Office of Insular Affairs, the U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee and the Nova Southeastern University's Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography. The program's vision is a thriving collaborative fellowship program that builds excellent next generation leaders and capacity for effective local coral reef ecosystem management.**



Fellow News is published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coral Reef Conservation Program and Nova Southeastern University to relay information about the fellowship program and provide a forum for information exchange among fellows, jurisdictions and program partners.

Please send your questions and suggestions for future editions to [kmontenero@nova.edu](mailto:kmontenero@nova.edu)

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